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Gender differences in attitudes towards childlessness and procreative behavior: findings from a representative survey in Lithuania 2018-2019

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Background I

- Topics of men's procreative behavior and attitudes towards childlessness rarely fall into the field of demographical research **traditionally focused on women.**
- This tendency is observed in both Lithuanian and foreign research. However, this field is getting more attention in recent years (Rijken, Merz 2015; Mynarska, Rytel 2020, etc.).

Background II

- In Lithuania, several qualitative studies have been conducted on the topic of men's procreative behavior and paternal identity, but they are not representative and are intended to examine only a few narrow aspects of this research field (Maslauskaitė, Tereškinas, 2017; 2020).

Aim of the Study

The goal of our study is to examine gender differences in attitudes towards **childlessness** and **procreative behavior**.

Data

- Our analysis is based on the **2018-2019** 'Families and Inequality Survey' dataset collected in Lithuania.
- The data covers 3,005 individuals **aged 35-49** at the time of the survey.
- The **representative** sample was obtained by using a stratified sampling method.
- Face-to-face interviews were carried out with respondents in their homes by using a standardized questionnaire.

Method

- The differences of frequencies were compared using the *Pearson* chi-square test.
- Differences are interpreted as significant if the *p*-value is lower than 0.05.
- Statistical analysis was performed with IBM SPSS 26.0.0.1.

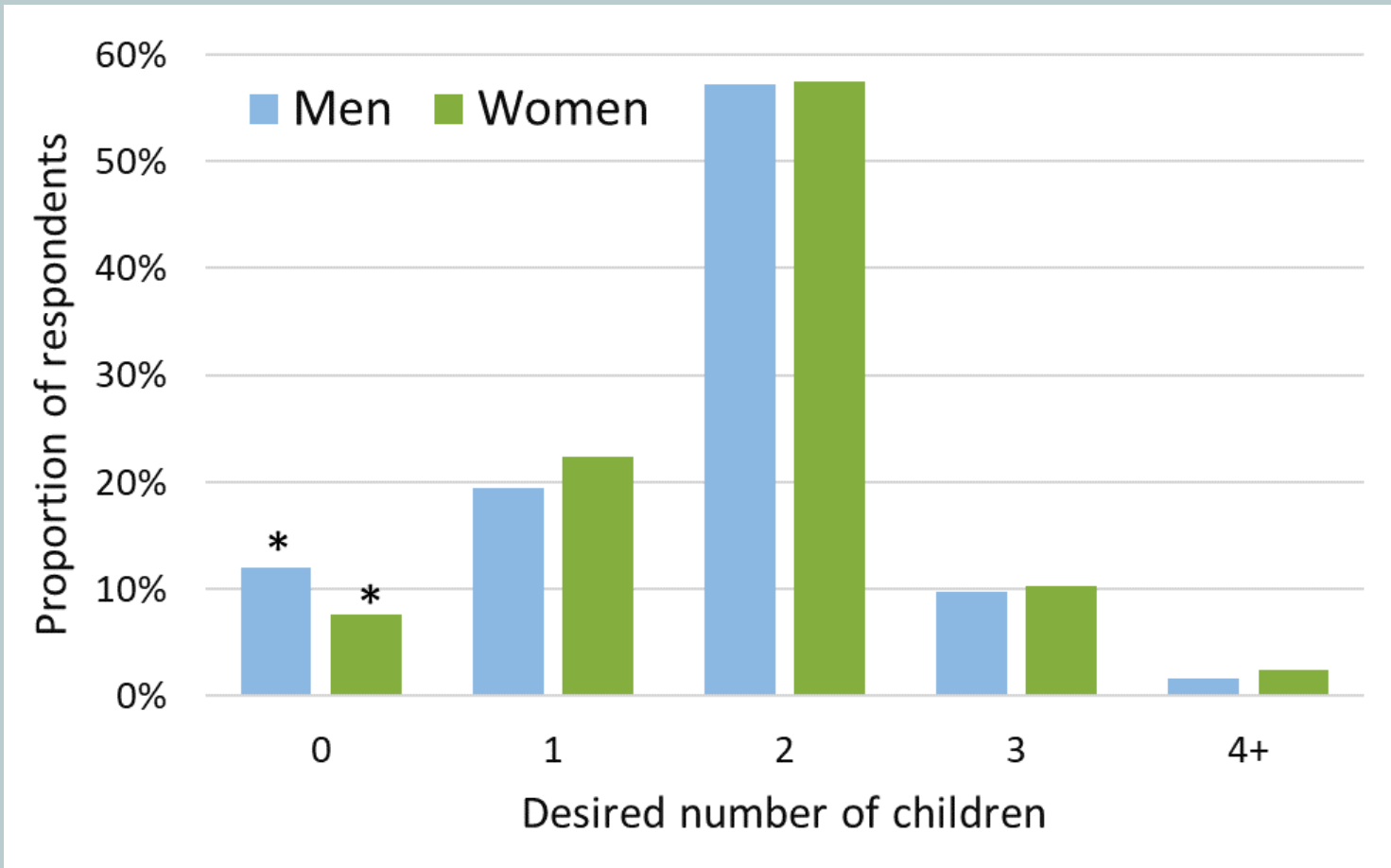
Characteristics of the Study Sample

| Variable | N | % |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Gender | | |
| Men | 1225 | 40.77 |
| Women | 1780 | 59.23 |
| Age group | | |
| 30-34 | 363 | 12.08 |
| 35-39 | 1011 | 33.64 |
| 40-44 | 755 | 25.12 |
| 45-49 | 876 | 29.15 |
| Education | | |
| Higher | 837 | 45.56 |
| Secondary | 1026 | 46.86 |
| Lower than secondary | 86 | 7.29 |

Data source: 'Families and Inequality Survey', collected in Lithuania, 2018-2019. Calculations made by authors'.

Results

Distribution of desired number of children

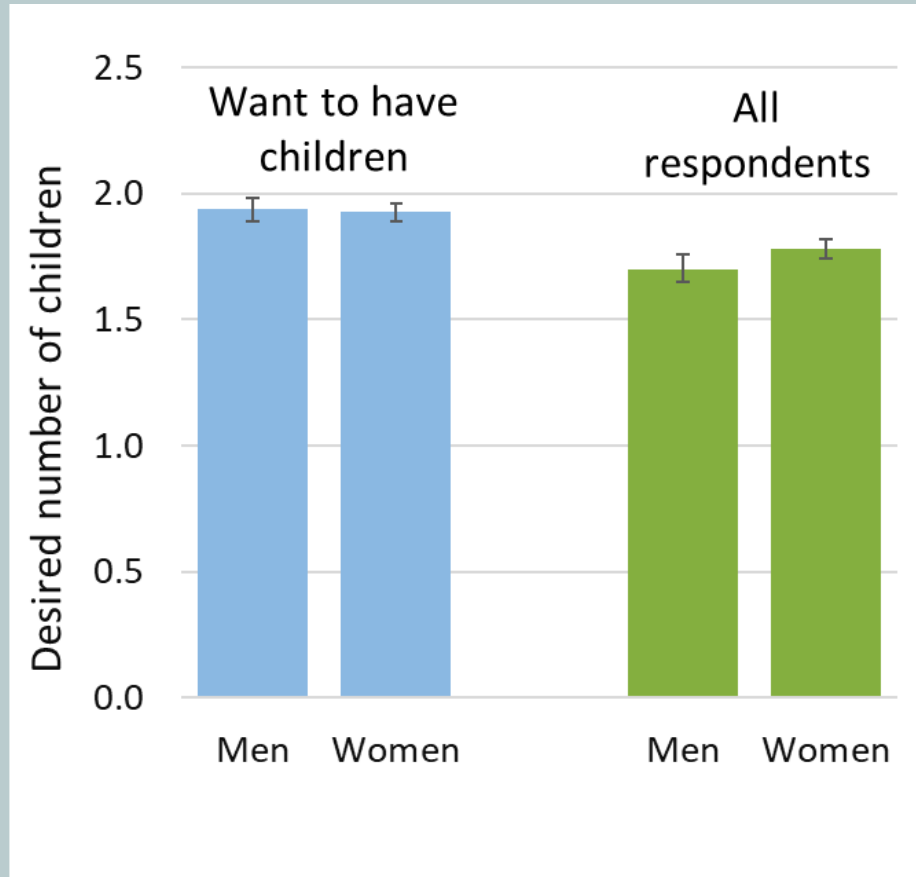


We found that the proportion of men (12.0%) who do not want to have children is statistically significantly higher ($p=0.003$) than the proportion of women (7.6%).

Note. Respondents answered the question 'How many children do you want (wanted) to have?'

Data source: 'Families and Inequality Survey', collected in Lithuania, 2018-2019. Calculations made by authors'.

Average number of desired children



- Average desired number of children was almost equal among men 1.94 and women 1.93 who expressed desire to have children.
- Desired number of children differed when included all respondents. It was 1.70 for men and 1.78 for women. However, the difference was not statistically significant.

Note. Respondents answered the question 'How many children do you want (wanted) to have?' Confidence interval 95%

Data source: 'Families and Inequality Survey', collected in Lithuania, 2018-2019. Calculations made by authors'.

Childlessness approval

| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree |
|---|--------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Woman can fully realize herself only when she has children | | | |
| Men | 46.1% | 38.4% | 15.5%* |
| Women | 46.7% | 34.5% | 18.9%* |
| Man can fully realize himself only when he has children | | | |
| Men | 41.0% | 39.9% | 19.1% |
| Women | 38.0% | 41.5% | 20.4% |

Note. The difference of share of respondents who disagree that 'woman can fully realize herself only when she has children' was statistically significant ($p=0.023$) between men and women.

Data source: 'Families and Inequality Survey', collected in Lithuania, 2018-2019. Calculations made by authors'.

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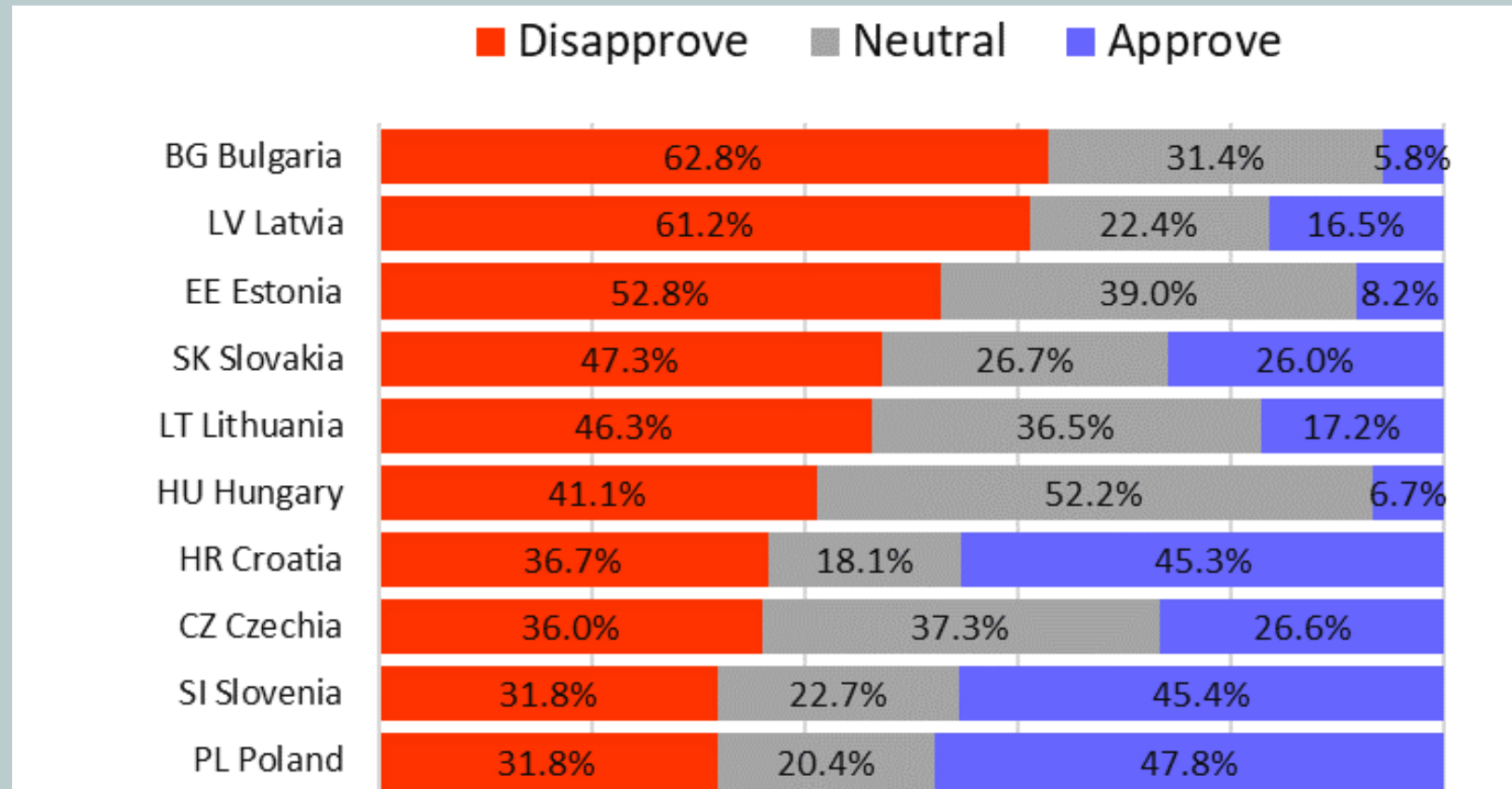
Data source: 'Families and Inequality Survey', collected in Lithuania, 2018-2019. Calculations made by authors'.

Main Findings

- We found that the proportion of men (12.0%) who do not want to have children is statistically significantly higher than the proportion of women (7.6%).
- Average desired number of children is almost equal among men 1.94 and women 1.93 who expressed desire to have children.
- Attitudes towards childlessness differs. Childless men were more acceptable than childless women.

Discussion

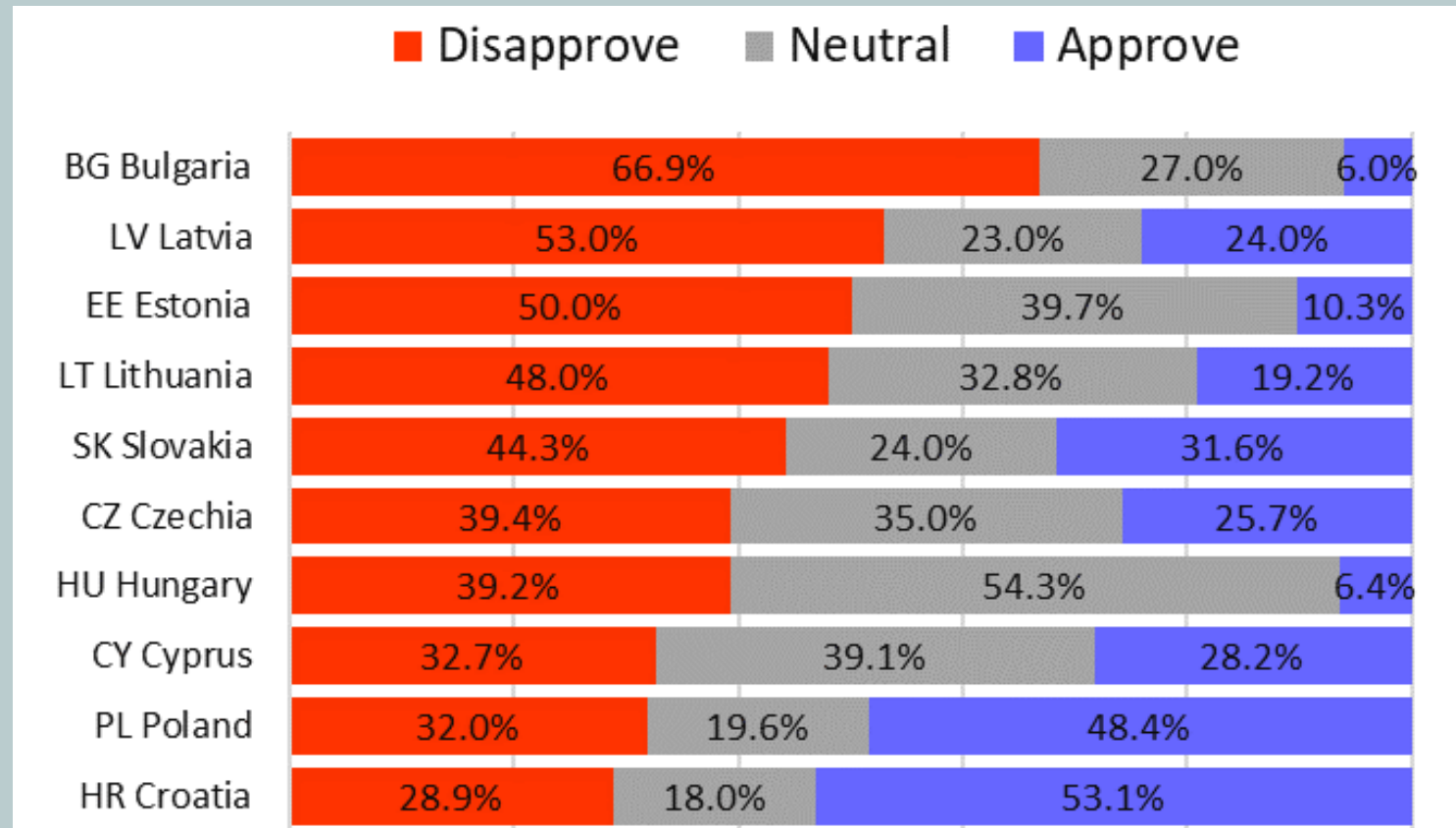
Men childlessness approval



Data source: European Social Survey, 2018. Calculations made by authors

Note: 10 EU countries with highest men childlessness disapproval.

Women childlessness approval



Data source: European Social Survey, 2018. Calculations made by authors

Note: 10 EU countries with highest women childlessness disapproval.

Conclusions

Our findings indicate that childbearing norms remain gendered among respondents aged 35-49 in Lithuania
Childless men were more acceptable than childless women.

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Literature

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Thank you!

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